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# Accommodating Copts in Mubarak's Egypt: Research Design and Historical Review

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# Accommodating Copts in Mubarak's Egypt: Research Design and Historical Review

**by**

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**Report**

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# Dedication

*To my parents,*

*Fred and Miriam Mishrikey,*

*who have made great sacrifices*

*for my education.*

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to several people, who have guided me along the way.

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Fight like an Egyptian.

# Abstract

## Accommodating Copts in Mubarak's Egypt: Research Design and Historical Review

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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Several scholars have examined how Middle East states preserve their autocratic character. Some focus on competitive multi-party elections, which either "ease important forms of distributional conflict" (Blaydes 2011) or are pre-designed to favor incumbents (Levitsky and Way 2002; 2010). Others posit the existence of political parties, which regulate conflict and prevent elite defection (Brownlee 2007). Given the overthrow of a slew of governments during the Arab Spring, antecedent theories on authoritarian durability seem incomplete. Although prior explanations are not attenuated by recent state collapses, further research is required to explain the erstwhile success of Middle East authoritarianism. In particular, less attention is paid toward minority groups.

This research design is an inductive theory-building project that seeks to explain how states manage minority groups. I investigate Coptic Church history over three presidencies: Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970), Anwar Sadat (1970-1981), and Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). Drawing from historical analyses, I argue that the Mubarak regime eased its relations[1] with the Coptic Church as an accommodating bargain: if the church discouraged communal challenges against the state, the Mubarak regime would permit the Church to manage its cultural and religious affairs. The purpose of this research is to offer a guiding light on authoritarian regimes and minority groups.

1 Academic literature denotes the term "church-state" as the relationship between faith communities, writ large, and government. More simply, "church" has been the institutionalized form of religion. However, for the purposes of this design, the term will refer to the relationship between the Coptic Church and the ruling regime in Egypt.

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***Background***

Protests and social movements dominated news headlines in 2011, prompting pundits and scholars to reflect on parallel moments in years' past. Some likened 2011 to 1979 and 1991, years marked by the respective collapse of governments in Iran and the Soviet Union. Others considered 1968 a worthy comparison, when a host of clashes from below served as the ideational overture for democratization movements in subsequent decades.[2] This past year received considerable attention, in part because no one anticipated a wave of regime transitions in a rather unlikely place.

Middle East states endured something akin to a regional diffusion effect. Its people challenged autocratic regimes, with rulers abdicating power from Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. The region also witnessed civil uprisings in Bahrain and Syria, as well as major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman. With few exceptions, Middle Easterners favored the Arab Spring: if the region could transition away from authoritarian rule, the effect would have far-reaching implications on our academic understanding of democratization.

Scholars have debated the appropriateness of democratization in some places over others. Fareed Zakaria, for example, cautions that democratically elected regimes may ignore the "limits on their power" and deprive "citizens of their basic freedoms" (1997). Whereas a cursory investigation would show Western democracies respecting liberal ideas and norms laid out in their constitutions, elsewhere, in places like Peru and the Philippines, democracy evolves more superficially: though they accept participation and permit contestable elections, they fail to provide the rule of law and basic human rights. Symptoms of such "illiberal democracy" include centralized regimes, an erosion of liberty, ethnic competition, conflict, and war (1997). Others

[2] The protests of 1968 and 2011 draw many similarities, but each year's events did *not* produce identical causes and effects. Whereas a spate of social movements throughout the 1960s shaped the values of students and workers in 1968, civil rights and class conflict did not actuate the Arab Spring.

dispute Zakaria's proposition and ask if these symptoms can exist within a democracy (see Plattner 1997 and Collier and Levitsky 1997). The definitional debate is important, but no one country represents pure democracy.

Zakaria's proposition requires further analysis and, arguably, it may be tested by the transitioning states in the Middle East. For example, Egypt must overcome half-a-century of authoritarian rule and find resolve that new political groups, i.e. Islamists and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), can successfully transition to democracy.

The success of the transition will hinge on Egypt's ability to pass through parliamentary and presidential elections. The state must also address a number of cross-cutting political pressures. For one, how will the new regime account for minority groups? If democracy is tied to the protection of citizens' basic freedoms, the democratically elected legislature and executive will have to account for minority Muslim sects. More centrally, they must be accountable to the Coptic Church which, for decades, has had parishioners complain about discrimination and oppression in the Muslim majority country.

The Arab Spring has "moved" the Coptic Church to a more unfavorable place. If true, then the *ancién regime* may have been more accommodating than the powers that be today. One can look no further than three weeks after Hosni Mubarak's abdication, when either a Muslim or Islamic group burnt down the *Shahidayn* Coptic Church.[3] Copts and Muslims agreed, it seems, that the incident occurred because "families feud[ed] over a romance between a Christian man and a Muslim woman," which is a commonplace scenario in the "Egyptian inter-religious landscape" (Shenoda in *Jadaliyya*, 18 May 2011). Other clashes occurred on the eastern periphery of Cairo, in Muqattam,[4] as well as the Imbaba district and the Minya province. To

[3] This church is also known as the Church of the Two Martyrs, Mar Mina and Mar Girgis in Afteeh, Helwan.
[4] Copts venerate this section of eastern Cairo because of an incident the tenth century, when a Copt miraculously

complicate matters, the death of the Coptic patriarch, Pope Shenouda III, invites questions about whether the Church should continue the Pope's legacy or move in a different religious and political direction.

For this report, I begin a preliminary investigation into autocrats' accountability toward minority groups. I focus specifically on the regime's interaction with the Coptic Church. I structure this report as a research design. First, I explore the literature on church-state relations, Islam, and clientelism, all of which relate to the Coptic Church in one way or another. Taken together, however, the antecedent literature contains gaps that do not capture the connection between the Church and the government. Then, in an argument section, I explore the Church's political role within the state. It is my hope that a contextual analysis will allow me to develop an inductive theory about regime accommodation toward minority groups. Finally, I conclude with a design that may be executed for further research on the topic.

moved a mountain to save the community from an impending attack by the *khalifa* al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah.

**Review of Literature**

Academics have enriched a variety of disciplines on church-state relations, either through broad analytic treatments of the world's religions or through focused work on sects.[5] The Coptic Church has enjoyed similar attention, but only through ancient historical reporting. As historian Paul Sedra opens in one essay, "[r]eferences to Coptic studies far more commonly evoke images of the fifth-century Council of Chalcedon than of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Revolutionary Command Council" (2009: 1049). Interestingly though, Copts receive national and international attention today after attacks against them. They will make headlines because of sectarian violence with Muslims or if Westerners are more broadly interested in Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle East.[6]

Copts may find comfort in this attention but also lament that such exposure comes when they are attacked. They often remark about a patterned "invisible" history of violence and discrimination (Shenoda in *Jadalliya*, 18 May 2011). Unfortunately, for whatever reason, scholars have not examined the modern Church and community. This absence of scholarship is troubling, especially because Egypt's democratization efforts arguably hinge on the protection of the Church.

Before touching on an argument and brief history, I provide a broad overview of the extant literature. This review relates only tangentially to the Church. In fact, I seldom mention the Copts in the next three subsections.[7] However, a discussion of "Church-State Relations," "Islamic Fundamentalism," and "Clientelism" offers frames for studying religion in the Middle East. Each frame does not capture the Coptic Church independently, but they *do* interact with

[5] The next section, "Church-State Relations," provides a cursory review of both approaches.
[6] Copts represent the largest Christian church in Egypt and the Middle East.
[7] For a more direct discussion on the Copts and their history, please skip these sections and begin with "Historical Review: Argument, Questions, and Hypotheses."

their story. More to the point, a review of the broad literature is necessary for preliminary work and research designs.

*Church-State Relations.* The comparative literature on religion has developed, it seems, the same way proponents of evolution forecasted religion's decline. As far back as the nineteenth century, the social sciences established theories predicting religion's gradual obsolescence.[8] Industrialization and scientific progress gave societies reason to believe that the church need not be a central authority or provider of welfare. Anthony Gill (1998: 2) laments this continued wave of support in the twentieth century, when social scientists imagined modernized societies divorcing religion from public and private life (Wallace 1966; Berger 1967). Social and political changes would relegate traditionalism, and the "mobile personality"—activated by empathy and cooperation—would lift man from his cultural trappings to enter a more secular, urban, and literate world (Lerner 1958). In sum, modernization theory became influential, namely because it stood for a movement that commended scientific progress and bureaucratic specialization (Almond 1960; Inglehart 1998, 2000, 2005).[9]

Despite its ascendancy, modernization theory has trouble explaining the pervasiveness of religion. Its central claim is that socioeconomic progress and the attainment of material security impact culture through improvements in human autonomy and choice. By substituting survivalist with self-expression values, societies engage in an interrelated process of what advocates call human development (Inglehart et al. 2005). This logic notwithstanding, religion and culture permeate developed countries just as much as they do developing ones. Instead of modernity's proscription of religion, states seem to be bringing it back in. The World Values Survey indicates

8 One can look no further than Nietzsche's proclamation in *The Gay Science* that "God is dead."
9 Gill uses "Modernization Theory" and "Secularization Thesis" interchangeably.

more than three quarters of respondents in 43 countries professing their belief in a higher being; further, 63% consider themselves religious and 70% claim membership to a religious denomination (Inglehart et al. 1998).

Religion matters in discourse and as phenomenon. It interacts, if only latently, with the activities of states. If casual observation of the world and empirical research demonstrate this proposition, then the comparative discipline ought not to treat religion epiphenomenally. Anthony Gill (2001) elaborates for two reasons:

> First, given the degree to which religious beliefs and organizations are deeply ingrained in almost every nation, ignoring religion means overlooking a potentially important variable in explaining politics...[additionally], the insights drawn from research on religious beliefs and organizations have a direct bearing on questions of major importance to comparative political scientists. The broad topics of collective action, institutional design and survival, and the connection between ideas and institutions come immediately to mind (117-118).

In particular, the modern Middle East casts tremendous attention on religious communities, some of whom receive favor from ruling governments. These communities do not necessarily constitute majorities in society. In fact, insights drawn from this project will help us better understand state relations with majority and minority religious groups.

The literature describes three prevailing approaches to assess the relationship between religion and politics (Mainwaring 1986). (1) Analysis must consider the *institutional* character of religion. Institutions are built on interests and rules, which organizations attempt to defend. These organizations carry several objectives, one of which is to influence both society and the state. If organizations change (ostensibly owing to some societal transformation), they do so in an attempt to "defend their interests and expand their influence" (1986: 3). In the subsequent review on fundamentalism and Islam, we discover that the distinction between "religion" and "state" is vague and problematic. This fuzziness may explain, as Jonathan Fox reports (2006),

why governments in the Middle East favor religious inclusion over secularism. (2) A *neo-marxian* analysis posits state involvement in social and political conflicts, which ineluctably impinges on religious institutions. This is theoretically distinct from the first analysis. Mainwaring explains:

> If a religious organization or movement believes that its mission dictates political involvement, the political struggle will affect its vision of faith. Then the analysis of institutional change requires focusing on the political struggle (1986: 12).

(3) The *classical* line of analysis, developed by Weber, Troeltsch, Niebuhr and others, subsumes aspects of the first two approaches. Weber in particular understands institutional change brought about by non-rational (charismatic forces) and rational (institutional) processes. Advocates of this approach agree with Marx, Nietzsche, and Durkheim that the church leaves a fundamentally conservative imprint on society, "palliat[ing] the suffering of the masses and bolster[ing] the domination of elites" (1986: 11).

The broader point in elaborating on these approaches is to suggest a tension between church and state. Each institution draws its authority from distinct sources—the church from a divine mandate and the state from a desire to maintain order and promote economic growth. Both institutions imagine a world that satisfies their individual interests, but those interests may not always be compatible. To complicate the matter, church and state will "lean" on one another (for better or worse) instead of establishing some institutional separation. As Gill notes, "states frequently enter the domain of personal morality and seek transcendental justification for their actions. And, for religions, the moral proclamations of spiritual leaders often have an effect of either legitimating or challenging power relations in secular society" (1998: 1). The argument brought forward in this project is that ruling regimes will prevent any such challenges.

*Fundamentalism and Islam.* As the previous subsection suggests, the comparative literature has understood religion through an institutional lens.[10] Over time, religious organizations have ceded authority over society to the state and, in doing so, respected restrictions and observed state coercion. Institutional adaptation and the separation of church and state are clearer in democracies than they are in autocracies. Fox (2006) investigates "separations" of religion and state between 1990 and 2002, using a Religion and State database to analyze 152 countries. Contingent on his definition of "separation," Fox's results show that no state has a full separation except the United States. Additionally, more than 75% of states have no separation; government involvement in religion (GIR) has increased; and most notably, states with Muslim majorities have higher levels of government support for religion.

Especially in the Middle East, we observe a lack of separation between church and state. Ann Elizabeth Mayer (1991) writes:

> Although the adoption of the nation-state seems to be a *fait accompli* in the Muslim world, just as it is elsewhere, developments at the level of Islamic doctrine have tended to lag behind their counterparts in the political arena. No general consensus has yet emerged among Muslims regarding the role Islam should play in the political and legal order of contemporary nation-states (1015).

Though we would be mistaken to say that the majority of Middle Eastern states are "Islamic," i.e. Islam is the ideological foundation for state political institutions, the number of states that identify Islam as its state religion far outnumber secular states with Muslim majorities.[11] The general lack of separation muddles our understanding of authority. Does the state claim

10 Only until recently, within the last three decades, have scholars begun to consider ideational models of religious politics that incorporate the role of institutions and other socioeconomic factors (Smith 1991; Mainwaring 1986). Others have recently understood religious politics through rational choice, political economy, and broad interest-based approaches (Iannaccone 1990; 1992).

11 The Muslim world can be distinguished among states that are "Islamic," states that have "state religions," and states that are secular; as Mayer notes, literature on Islam and the state is vast. They include H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (1982); *L'Islam et l'eta dans le mond d'aujour'hui* (O. Carre ed. 1982); J. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation States* (1986); E. Rosenthal, *Islam in the Modern National State* (1965); P. Vatikiotis, *Islam and the State* (1987); S. Subaida, *Islam, the People and the State* (1989).

monopoly on the legitimate use of force? Or do religious groups? If nation-states do not establish rules that delineate the extent of religious authorities' power, opportunities arise for fundamentalist groups to express their interests politically. In more relevant terms, a political wedge opens for religious organizations to adapt their institutional rules.

Thus the emergence of Islamism has intrigued Middle East scholars. Given the rapid interest on fundamentalism within the comparative literature, a number of experts argue that fundamentalism can be classified under its own analytic category (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis 1992). Sahgal and Yuval-Davis argue that Islamic fundamentalism has three main features: (1) it is a project to control women's bodies, (2) it is a political practice which rejects pluralism, and (3) it is a movement that purposely conflates religion and politics as a means of furthering its aims. Though some scholars question the first component of Sahgal and Yuval-Davis' fundamentalism thesis (Sayyid and Sayyid 2003), the latter two features are generally accepted and particularly interesting for the purpose of this project.

I would be remiss if we did not discuss the lack of consensus on an accepted conceptualization of the term "Islamism." Martin and Barzegar (2010) make this point—that pundits and politicians, Jewish and Christian intellectuals, and Muslim and non-Muslim scholars debate its origin and contemporary application. A common interpretation, at least in the West, is to conflate not just Islamism, but *Islam*, with violence (Sayyid and Sayyid 2003; Demant 2006; Martin and Barzegar 2010). Demant denotes the term as the "radical religious movement of 'political Islam'" (2006: xxii). Others have conceptualized Islam more bleakly. The minority groups in Muslim societies, or *dhimmis*, have "bor[ne] the role of victim, vanquished by force" since the time of the Prophet (Ye'or 1985: 35). However these views suggest that all Islamic groups have extremist political ideologies and ignore the bloody history of Christians and Jews.

It may be misleading, as Sedra writes describing Ye'or, to perceive Islam "as a ubiquitous system not merely of belief, but of life…of Muslims" oppressing *dhimmis* over time (Sedra 2011: 1050).

This research moves past the semantic debate and adopts Martin and Barzegar's definition: Islamism is a neologism that has come into popular use to refer to "social movements and attitudes that advocate the search for more purely Islamic solutions to the political, economic, and cultural stresses of contemporary life" (2010: 2). Literature on Islamism is constrained to the ambiguous and contested relationship between Islam and political violence; it is usually employed either through single-country cases or by way of a general survey of the region.

*Clientelism.* Earlier, I suggested how religion in developed and developing societies challenged modernization theory. Other factors appear to shake modernization's theoretical foundations as well. For one, political scientists often wonder why Middle East states fail to democratize. If modernization theory suggests that democratization occurs when countries surpass a certain economic threshold (Przeworski 1997), how do we explain the lack of democratization in wealthy oil states and the outgrowth of democratization in poor countries like India and Bangladesh? Since the theory cannot wholly explain democratization, scholars have put forward a host of alternative explanations. Several argue that oil wealth "discourages" authoritarian breakdown (Luciani 1987; Ross 2001; Smith 2004). Others investigate the effects of Islam and Arab culture (Hudson 1995; Kramer 2003; Tessler 2002). And, not unlike Sahgal and Yuval-Davis' thesis, political scientists have analyzed the subordination of women in Islamic societies (Fish 2002).

Others have investigated patronage practices, or *clientelism*, as an explanation for

authoritarian durability. Lisa Blaydes remarks that the term is "generally defined as a relationship between parties of unequal status that involves some form of exchange" (2006: 2). Clientelism is usually studied through the lens of elections. As Huntington and Nelson note:

> In traditional societies, patron-client relations provide a means for the vertical mobilization of lower-class individuals by established elites...The introduction of competitive elections gives the client one additional resource – the vote – which he can use to repay his patron for other benefits (1976: 55)

Indeed the literature on clientelism has grown, but only to benefit our understanding of vote-buying. Dixit and Londregran (1996) posit that 'swing' voters, i.e. those individuals with fewer ideological constraints, are the most cost-efficient votes to purchase in developed countries; Calvo and Murillo (2004) show how clientelistic practices produce a variety of returns for economically advantaged and disadvantaged voters; and Stokes (2005) shows how political machines target the poor. Unfortunately, most empirical work on clientelism has looked at Latin America (Calco and Murillo 2004; Stokes 2005; Auyero 2004; Brusco et. al. 2004). Blaydes (2006) and Kassem (1999) *do* examine patronage systems in Egypt, but again, they do so through an electoral perspective.

Clientelism may present a definitional problem. Typically, the term is associated with some monetary transaction between groups. The exchange then prompts a sort of reflexive response by recipients to support the donor. Early observations suggest that money has not been passed down, nor has there been a vote-buying scheme between the state and the Church. However, exchanges can translate as a permit to construct a church or state security to protect parishioners at mass. By adopting Blaydes' definition, we observer clientelistic processes taking place in Egypt.

*Synthesizing Review*. Scholarly work on topics of the Middle East often touches on church-state

relations, fundamentalism and Islam, and clientelism. Each approach has affected the Coptic Church in modern Egyptian history and each continues to do so today.

This report will introduce how the state improved its relations with the Church during the Mubarak regime, even despite pressure from outside groups. More broadly, it will offer us clues about how authoritarian regimes manage groups in society and how they stay resilient. The next section provides a brief historical overview, which is necessary to address the argument, questions and hypotheses the report hopes to test.

***Historical Review: Argument, Questions, and Hypotheses***

In the aftermath of an Alexandria church bombing,[12] which claimed twenty-one parishioners' lives, the *New York Times* reported that Egypt's inter-communal conflict between majority Muslims and minority Coptic Christians "climaxed the bloodiest year in four decades of sectarian tension[s]" (Stack and Kirkpatrick: 2 January 2011). Yet no more than a month later, the world witnessed an unprecedented unity between the two peoples, who stood hand-in-hand, Koran-with-Crucifix, in solidarity against a moribund autocracy. A common enemy decreased group animosities. This brief consensus notwithstanding, ethno-religious tensions have the potential to deepen again. Some have even argued that the conflict has already exacerbated—both visibly and latently (Shenoda in *Jadaliyya* 2011).

Each president managed the Copts differently. Interestingly, Hosni Mubarak cooperated better with the Church than did his predecessors. Thus his abdication raises questions about whether the government overthrow benefits minority groups.

This preliminary research does not predict what will happen to the Coptic Church. It can only investigate what has happened, and though it analyzes the Church specifically, it has broader implications on minority, religious, and ethnic groups in the Middle East.

The *Copts as an Ethnic Group.* Elaborating on faith communities' interaction with the state necessitates a brief word on the role of ethnicity in state politics. Without ignoring the broader debate about whether we can operationalize "ethnicity" (Chandra 2006), comparative scholars

[12] The bombing occurred on January 1, 2011, just twenty minutes past midnight. Parishioners attended midnight mass "not only to usher in the new year (the Coptic New Year, incidentally, is celebrated on 11 September), but to sing praises to the Virgin Mary during the Coptic advent month of *Kiahk* in anticipation of the birth of Christ celebrated on 7 January." The state issued an immediate response, claiming that the bombing was "the doing of outside forces," namely Al Qaeda. The implication of such a response is that groups or individuals within Egypt could not have perpetrated such an attack. Further, Shenoda asserts that "[t]ypically, the State offers one of two possibilities for these kinds of attacks on Copts: foreign intrusion or, if the perpetrator is undeniably Egyptian, then he must be mentally insane" (Shenoda in *Jadaliyya,* 18 May 2011).

conjecture some association with religion. One prevailing conceptualization denotes ethnicity by groups "differentiated by color, language, and religion" (Horowitz 1985, 53). Other scholars have adopted this "umbrella" classification (Varshney 2002, Chandra 2004, Htun 2004, Wilkinson 2004, Posner 2005) and the four principle datasets that measure the effect of ethnic identity do the same as well (Bruk & Apenchenko 1964, Alesina et al 2003, Fearon 2003, Gurr 1993 & 2000). Studying how ethnicity affects group relations would matter for this research; decisions made by the Egyptian government toward the Church are not made without first considering the interests of a variety of Muslim groups[13].

The scholarly debate on elite-based models of ethnic conflict may not fit well within an Egyptian context. For one, the Copts are disproportionately smaller compared to their Muslim counterparts; Egyptian elites have not had incentives to induce ethnic unrest. This logic notwithstanding, the Copts remain a notable and coherent population. If the Mubarak regime relaxed its policy toward the Church, it prompts one to wonder why. Thus, while we find less clarity in applying an explicit elite-centric ethnic conflict model, the broader theory—that elites manage organizations and, in particular, ethnic groups—may still apply.

*Historical Context.* Scholars offer conclusions about culture, ethnicity, and conflict during periods of democratic transition and consolidation. Less emphasis is placed on the conditions leading up to democratization. In other words, if the tension between Copts and Muslims (as well as Copts and the State) occurred well before the government collapse, how do we explain the

[13] Setting aside the theoretical debate, scholars have propounded theories on ethnicity's effect on politics. However, they have done so by first understanding it *in reverse*: the effect of political life on ethnicity. One perspective in the literature suggests that democratization exacerbates ethnic conflict, especially at the direction of elites who engineer it (Snyder 2000; Wilkinson 2004). Steve Wilkinson, in particular, shows democratization's meliorating and exacerbating effects in ethnically-divided Indian communities. His causal argument suggests that elites organize anti-minority events to foment violent, minority counter-mobilizations. The resulting conflict between ethnic groups then spurs ethnic majority voters behind nationalist parties (2004: 6).

origins of the conflict? Further, if Copts possess particular grievances, why not redress them by participating directly and indirectly in national politics? Recent history shows little or no variation in direct participation, such as representation in government. Yet peculiarly, Church-state relations have improved markedly since the beginning of the Mubarak regime.

The vicissitudes of Church politics are best understood through a twentieth-century reading of Coptic and presidential history. With Egypt's presidents, we observe an interesting variation over how they administered power. Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat oversaw domestic politics by managing the country's ethnic groups. Hosni Mubarak ruled no differently, but better accommodated the Copts. Mubarak's bargain was not unlike the strategy employed by his predecessors, however his program appears to have expanded beyond the quotidian interaction with business, labor, and professional associations. Mubarak inherited a state captured by a collective Islamist ethos. Scores of attacks saddled the Coptic community (Toth 2003); further, embedded within Egypt's constitution was a controversial article certifying Islamic jurisprudence as the principal source of legislation (Scott 2010). In the face of domestic and international pressures, it seems, Hosni Mubarak sought to quell the sectarianism. This policy served to benefit the Church.

Several comparative scholars have studied the Egyptian presidency and state issues regarding Islamic groups; few have tackled these topics in relation to the Church. As S.S. Hassan notes, the Church has over time become an influential political organization:

> In addition to the church leaders' arrogating to themselves exclusive political representation of their community, their conception of their role changed irrevocably: from the traditional praying and giving out alms to the poor in their locality to promoting economic and cultural efflorescence of the Coptic community as a whole (2003: 4).

Hassan's reading of modern Egypt demonstrates the extent to which the Church has

captured the attention of parishioners, Islamic groups, and the state. Since the 1952 coup d'etat, Egypt's presidents outwardly expressed concern over private voluntary associations, which had the potential to subvert the state (2003: 103). The Copts represented one of the more prominent and coherent groups in Egyptian society, with a secular aristocracy that "played an important role" in Parliament and the Communal Council (103). Gamal Abdel Nasser later prevented the Copts from participating within the state's institutions. However, because he assumed power with little legitimacy, Nasser sought to ensure government stability by taming sectarian tensions and mollifying Islamic and Coptic groups. Thus he promised the annual licensing on construction of twenty-five Coptic churches (104).

As Nasser filled the power vacuum and the state built churches, a power struggle ensued between Coptic elites and those within the Church. The Coptic elite once served in the government and headed various private business and economic sectors. After the mid-century coup, their power diminished greatly. These 'secular' Copts no longer served as vanguard of the community; thereafter, the Church hierarchy—monks, priests, bishops, and the patriarch—became "stewards of the Coptic communal morality" (Sedra 2009: 1058-59).

The power struggle continued, but this time within the hierarchy. One circle, headed by a monk named Matta al-Miskin[14], mobilized laymen to work and live explicitly for the Church.[15] Matta advocated a more spiritual community; religion would be tailored more toward the "conscience of the individual" (1058). Another circle hoped the Church would carry a more

[14] A doctor who owned two pharmacies, two houses, and two cars, Yusuf Iskander abandoned this life to become a monk—he adopted the name Matta al-Miskin.

[15] Sedra writes about this developing Coptic identity: "[t]he movement led to the development of religious texts and the expansion of charitable activities. By 1976, Matta had transformed the Monastery of Saint Makariyus into a thriving agricultural enterprise. The fifty monks of the monastery, among whom were five pharmacists, six physicians, and twelve engineers, enjoyed much success in land reclamation. Matta was emblematic of a generation of young monks struggling…to reinvigorate the spiritual life of the Church. Researchers at the postgraduate Institute of Coptic Studies…studied Coptic language, history, art, archaeology, theology, and canon lay. Further, they sought to microfilm all the antiquities of Egypt's churches and monasteries. By 1963, the Coptic Sunday School Movement had reached one million students…through 4000 branches and 5000 teachers" (2009: 1058).

social and political banner. Sermons and Sunday School would deliver practical messages for laymen, and younger generations would find value in a Church that addressed issues like "dating and studying" (1058). Nazir Gayyad, a monk who once served in the Egyptian military and studied journalism, headed the latter movement. The Church later appointed him to be Bishop of Education. Thereafter, he adopted the name Shenouda.

As the internal debate ensued among Coptic elites, the Church hierarchy, and others within the hierarchy, Nasser promoted a number of programs signaling leadership on behalf of the Arab world. After assuming power in 1956, he began a domestic and foreign policy agenda often at odds with the West. First, he supported anti-colonial efforts during the Algerian War (1954-1962) and endorsed state campaigns to destabilize a British-sponsored economic pact in the region.[16] If the British and French governments were irritated by Nasser's brazenness, imagine their shock when he agreed to an arms deal with Soviet bloc countries, recognized the People's Republic of China, nationalized the Aswan High Dam, closed both the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba. Though Nasser's policies were at loggerheads with Western interests, the Middle Eastern world rallied behind his call for "Arab solidarity" (Dekmejian 1971: 45). For Egyptians, the president's policies cut across all demographics; citizens of all creeds and colors defended Nasser's enthusiasm for pan-Arabism. Parishioners of the Coptic Church supported him no differently.

In contrast to Nasser's charismatic appeal, Anwar al-Sadat nettled the Church because of his patronage toward Islamist groups. Hassan notes:

> [Sadat] was, in fact, a virtual nonentity at his accession, and this lack of any personal legitimacy exposed him to the danger of an attempted coup within a year after he came to power. In casting about for an antidote to the leftist forces that had tried to unseat him in 1971, he found it politically expedient to lean on the religious

[16] The Central Treaty Organization (1955-1979), or Baghdad Pact, included Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The goal of the Pact was to contain the USSR while providing mutual military and political aid.

> forces. One of the unintended consequences of this marriage of convenience was the growth of the power of Islamic militants, of which not just the Christians but he himself was ultimately to be the victim (2003: 105).

Nazir Gayad, who later adopted the name Bishop Shenouda and advocated that the Church operate more politically, became Patriarch in October 1971. Because President Sadat leaned on Islamist groups, the Pope did what he could to defend Church interests. Following the amendment to the Constitution of Egypt, whereby the principles of Islamic law was the principle source of legislation, the Coptic leader organized conferences in protest. Soon after, Sadat placed Pope Shenouda under house arrest, a detention that would last three-and-a-half years through the beginning of Hosni Mubarak's presidency. Mubarak would inherit the presidency after Sadat's assassination. With a divided country, Mubarak sought a strategy to prop up his own authority while sowing up old political wounds.

*Hypotheses.* While examining Church-state relations, the principal goal of this research is to answer the following question: *Why did the state improve its ties with the Coptic Church during the Mubarak regime? "*Church-state relations" will be defined as the interaction between the Coptic Church and the ruling regime in Egypt, whereby religious authorities reach out for state assistance owing to a lack of coercive power. As mentioned before, I argue that Mubarak entered into a sort of clientelistic bargain with various groups in Egyptian society as a means to consolidate his authoritarian grip. This strategy served to weaken political opposition and strengthen the National Democratic Party. The following table shows the variation in state relations with the Church:

Table 1: Accountability of Church-State Relations by Presidency

| Presidency | | Duration | | Relations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nasser | ===> | 1956-1970 | ===> | Medium |
| Sadat | ===> | 1970-1981 | ===> | Low |
| Mubarak | ===> | 1981-2011 | ===> | High |

Sadat's presidency reflected a period when Islamism was high and Church-state relations were low. Islamism is used strictly to show one reason why Church-state relations improved. One could imagine Church-state relations and Islamism to be inversely related. However, as Mubarak becomes president, relations improved even when Salafist groups continued to wield influence.

I plan to test my clientelism argument (Hypothesis 1)[17] against alternative hypotheses. The following outlines those hypotheses and briefly explains how I attempt to test them:

Hypothesis 2: The frequency of *Islamist rhetoric and attacks* determine receptive or conflictual relations between the Church and the state. In short, I can compare rhetoric and incidents between Copts and Islamists, as well as Islamists and the state, from regime to regime. I can test attacks using RAND Corporation's Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, which details over 36,000 incidences. It codes each case by type, date, source, sponsor, region, tactic, description, among many more definitions. "Description" will help determine the frequency and nature of Islamist incidents. One inherent limitation of this database is that it may not code Islamist events in Egypt accurately. Thus content and discourse analyses, i.e. newspapers, articles, archives, will help the project determine the volume of rhetoric from regime to regime.

Hypothesis 3: Pressure applied by the *international community* determines receptive or

17 I discuss Hypothesis 1 in subsequent sections.

conflictual relations between the Church and the state. I can test and measure international pressure using content analysis and scholarly literature.

Hypothesis 4: The frequency and proximity of military conflicts determine receptive or conflictual relations between the Church and the state. When military conflict escalates, I can expect state involvement in Church affairs to be low. Again, I can test and measure 'military conflict' with content analysis and scholarly reviews.

Hypothesis 5: The level of economic prosperity in Egypt determines receptive or conflictual relations between the Church and the state. During periods of economic growth, I can expect Church-state relations to improve. Conversely, during economic downturns, I can expect Church-state relations to worsen. Drawing from various economic databases, I can compare state development over time with the data and historical information about the Church over time.

If the above-mentioned hypotheses offers one significant observable implication, it would be that minority groups may prefer to maintain the status quo under liberal authoritarian regimes than to support a coup against illiberal regimes (when their status is made much more vulnerable). This implication seems obvious by definition, but the more significant consideration may be more proverbial: that it is better to live with the devil you know.

*Methodological Overview.* The literature review focuses much of its attention on topics that affect the Church. However, no one topic explicitly investigates the Church using political science instruments. Blaydes (2006, 2011) and Kassem (1999) have come closest with their inquiries into Egyptian clientelism. However, both study patronage systems as processes to explain electoral outcomes. They do not offer insight on how clientelism as a strategy affects

minority groups in society. Other scholars *have* investigated minority groups. Yet they have done so to explain electoral outcomes (Wilkinson 2004), democratization and nationalism (Snyder 2000), and institutional solutions for ethnically divided societies (Lijphart 2004; Reilly 2002; Horowitz 1985).

This project's methodological approach blends the clientelism and minorities literature to explain state management of minority groups outside of elections. The Mubarak regime "stretched" its practice of managing various groups in society. Instead of focusing primarily on business, labor, and professional associations, the state reached out to prominent cultural leaderships such as Salafists and Copts. The discipline ought not to study clientelism just as a phenomenon that explains elections. Clientelistic processes, it seems, can be employed to regulate cultural cleavages. The implication, of course, is that authoritarian regimes can maintain power using strategies that do not involve elections (Blaydes 2006) or party structures (Brownlee 2007).

***Method and Plan of Work***

Keeping in mind the methodological problem of investigating a single-country case, I generate additional observations within the case by comparing among three presidential periods. First, I situate the Church and the state within a historical context. Then I rely on interviews and data analyses to complement the evidence extracted from a historical review. Thus a multi-methods approach via discourse analysis, archival research, comparative historical analysis, qualitative interviews, and available quantitative data will drive this project.

*Design.* The relationship between religious organizations and the state has been an understudied topic in the comparative literature.[18] As Gill remarked earlier, this is due in part to the discipline's apprehension to investigate a subject matter thought to be epiphenomenal. Equally important, topics not unlike this one have been avoided in the social sciences "because scholars believe that only phenomena of which there are a large number of cases can be studied in a truly scientific manner" (Skocpol 1979: 33). Harry Eckstein, in his book *Internal War*, defined "a theoretical subject" as:

> ...a set of phenomena about which one can develop informative, testable generalizations that hold for all instances of the subject, and some of which apply to those instances alone...[whereas] a statement about two or three cases is certainly a generalization in the dictionary sense, a generalization in the methodological sense must usually be based on more; it ought to cover a number of cases large enough for certain rigorous testing procedures like statistical analysis to be used (1964: 8, 10).

The comparative field, along with the rest of political science, is partial to an analytic strategy whereby certain topics may be subsumed within broader categories. However, this strategy risks ineffectual scholarship and explanations that do not "illuminate truly general patterns of causes and outcomes" (Skocpol 1979: 35).

18 This is not to say that religion has been an understudied topic in the discipline.

In lieu of some sweeping analysis, a historical review on a more modest project can offer just as much, if not more, insight into religion's place in politics. Comparative historical analysis is appropriate when other research methods are either impossible or not feasible. Skocpol conveniently elaborates in her book *States and Social Revolutions.* First, it develops explanations of macro-historical phenomena of which there are inherently only a few cases. This method of analysis contrasts more numerous and manipulative phenomena suitable for experiments, as well as phenomena that contain a large number of cases suitable for statistical analyses (1979: 36). In regard to the mechanics, comparative historical analyses establish valid associations between potential causes and the phenomenon a researcher wants to explain. It proceeds with either Mill's 'Method of Agreement' or 'Method of Difference,' the latter of which would work better for this project. The 'Method of Difference' "contrasts cases in which the phenomenon to be explained and the hypothesized causes are present to other cases in which the phenomenon and the causes are both absent, but which are otherwise as similar as possible to the positive cases" (1979: 36). I plan to model this approach. Whereas the phenomenon to be explained (receptive relations) and the hypothesized cause (clientelistic bargain) are present during the Mubarak era, both components are absent with Sadat. Additionally, relations decline as Islamist groups gain popularity toward the end of the Nasser regime.

After having provided a historical background, I then investigate whether the phenomena and hypotheses are supported by quantitative work. To do so, I turn to existing datasets collected from two sources: the Arab Barometer Project and the Association of Religion Data Archives' Religion and State (RAS) project. The former is coordinated by co-principal investigators Mark Tessler at the University of Michigan and Amaney Jamal at Princeton University. The Arab Barometer Project borrows from interview schedules used in other Democracy Barometer

surveys, and engineers its own survey instruments to gauge Arab public opinion. In addition to analyzing topics on culture, religion, and political climate in the Arab world, the Arab Barometer "measures attitudinal and behavioral dimensions" with regard to terrorism and political violence, religiosity and personal involvement in religious affairs, perceptions of state and regime performance and legitimacy, and of particular interest foe this study, the preferred relationship between religion and politics (Barometer).

The RAS project, coordinated by principal investigator Jonathon Fox of Bar Ilan University, contains two rounds of datasets that measure the extent of government involvement in religion (GIR) for 175 states between 1990 and 2002. The RAS data includes 62 GIR variables in categories essential for this study: *Official GIR* measures the official relationship between religion and state; *Official restrictions* measures government treatment of different religions; *Religious discrimination* measures restrictions on religious practices of minority groups; *Religious regulation* measures the extent of government regulation of the majority religion or all religions; and *Religious legislation* measures the extent to which government legislates various aspects of religious law.

Historical background and quantitative analysis, however, would constitute an incomplete assessment of Church-state relations. Given the nature of the project, we would encounter reliability and validity issues. A historical review is subjective in it and of itself, and the responses from the Arab Barometer and RAS may be contaminated by environmental influences like question wording and ordering (Zaller 1992).

In addition, the research would benefit greatly from archival work. Egypt's regimes may have prevented or discouraged research on a sensitive topic. It would not have benefited Presidents Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak for researchers to conducted elite interviews with leaders

from both the state and the Church. Given the recent overthrow, however, I can now retrieve a full range of considerations from people who can assess Church-state relations.

*Measures.* The dependent variable is meant to reveal receptive and conflictual relations. The independent variable, very simply, reflects the three presidential terms under which the Coptic Church interacted with the regime. Comparing across regimes, relations are coded "conflictual" based on incidents against the Church. Examining incidents will require content and data analysis of attacks—based on frequency, geographic variation, number of casualties, and targets—as well as rhetoric by the state and other organizations—based on speeches, reports, amendments to laws, etc. In Rachel Scott's *Challenge of Political Islam*, for example, the constitutional amendment to Article 2 had far-reaching implications for the Coptic Church. Amended during the Sadat regime, the article stipulates Islamic jurisprudence, or *Shari'a* law, as the principal source of legislation. A legal declaration of this kind may serve as useful indicator for conflictual relations.

Relations are coded "receptive" based on three categories: socio-economic, political, and cultural. I measure socio-economic growth based on Coptic wealth and education, business arrangements between elites and the state (i.e. delivery of public works and goods), and immigration rates. This category is primarily tested through qualitative interviews. I measure the political category based on mobilization from within the Church, i.e. encouraging or promoting parishioners to vote for the National Democratic Party, dissuading parishioners from protesting or engaging in protests, etc. I can also measure the level of inclusion in the bureaucracy and government. The political category would be tested through qualitative interviews with Church leaders, historical content analysis, and available data on "Government Involvement in Religion" (GIR) from the RAS database. Finally, I measure the culture category based on Church visibility,

i.e. ordination of bishops and fathers, the construction of churches, the celebration of festivals and holy days. I plan to test this through historical content analysis and elite interviews.

*Procedure*. I first plan to review the available literature on the Coptic Church. Rachel Scott's *Challenge of Political Islam: Non-Muslims and the Egyptian State* and S.S. Hassan's *Christians versus Muslims in Modern Egypt: The Century-Long Struggle for Coptic Equality* will be a launching pad for the within-case comparative historical analysis. I will also draw from literature outside of Egypt that investigates religion,[19] minorities,[20] and democratization[21] in the Arab world. Then I proceed to the survey data from the Arab Barometer and the RAS dataset. The latter data, in particular, have "Religious Freedom Indexes" and "Government and Religion" indexes, which derive code from either the RAS project or the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom reports. Finally, though the project does not require extensive interaction with human subjects, I plan to employ qualitative interviews by recruiting subjects from both the state government and the Church leadership. Interviews will observe the standards as laid out by Suchman and Jordan (1990). Thus though the interview will fundamentally be an "interaction," it will also serve as a reliable survey instrument, with relevant questions that are relevant, prepared in advance, articulated and read without variation, and "suppresses those interactional resources that routinely mediate uncertainties of relevant and interpretation" (1990: 242). Though a battery of questions have yet to be prepared for qualitative interviews, I plan on asking questions not unlike the following examples: "Do you think that each president treated religious or ethnic groups differently?" "Do you think relations between the state and the Coptic

19 Robert D. Lee's *Religion and Politics in the Middle East* examines the political determinants of religion, religion as a casual force, and dedicates a chapter of his book to religion in Egypt.

20 Bengio et. al's *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* and Nisan's *Minorities in the Middle East* explore minority group roles in the Arab World.

21 Rex Brynan et al. multi-volume *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World* investigates the theoretical perspectives and comparative experiences of peoples of the Middle East.

Church improved during the reign of a particular president?" 'Yes' and 'No' answers to questions may be useful for coding and measuring the dependent variable.

*Analysis and Interpretations*. Though much of the project focuses on the Coptic Church and the state, I should also investigate the alternative hypotheses to see if they contributed to the variation in Church-state relations as well. Outside of the data from the Arab Barometer and the RAS dataset, it will be difficult to use statistical techniques to find significance in each of the hypotheses and the argument I am proposing. Instead, I can rule out alternative answers by interviewing members of *other* religious groups, i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood, or *other* political parties, i.e. the secular Wafd Party, and see if there are noticeable variations or differences in their responses about Church-state relations.

I imagine results from the archival work, comparative historical analyses, Arab Barometer, and RAS dataset will support the hypothesis and argument. However, should I find evidence that challenges the variation, I can expect to draw it from the archives and qualitative interviews. Interviewing Coptic clergy or associated organizations may bring about biases against the regime owing to years and decades of putative discrimination. Thus they may not be able to distinguish receptivity from conflict among the three presidents. Interviewing political figures may present the same problem, but from the opposite direction.

*Generalizability.* Blaydes (2006) analyzes patron-client models on indigent voters in Egyptian elections; Brownlee (2007) studies political parties as the mechanism that maintains authoritarian governments. Yet scholars have yet to investigate thoroughly clientelistic practices between state governments and minority groups, especially within a Middle Eastern context. Thus the greatest weakness of this project is that little scholarly work has been done to establish generalizable

causal explanations. However, results from this project have implications for further study on minority groups, clientelistic practices, and the robust literature on authoritarianism.

Its greatest strength comes from the methods themselves. Employing only one method or approach on a topic that has been seldom studied would produce weak analyses. Donald Kinder notes, "On the assumption that all methods are fallible, dependable knowledge has its base in no single method but in triangulation across multiple methods" (1998: 783). Testing my hypotheses through three approaches will then contribute to external or internal validity of the project itself.

*Human Subjects.* In order to interact with human subjects, I plan to obtain IRB approval. Since I am interviewing subjects in an environment that would not place them at risk, I hope to pass through an expedited IRB review. Prospective human subjects will be given informed consent, which assures that they understand the nature of the research and can knowledgeably and voluntarily decide whether or not to participate. Informed consent will highlight both benefits and risks in participating. If, at the time of the interviews my command of Arabic is advanced or near-fluent, no translators will be required. However, in the event that I would need assistance, I plan to have translators and documentation written in Arabic to better accommodate human subjects and preclude any systematic defects in the qualitative interview process.

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